



**Date:** October 6, 2015  
**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**From:** Germaine Brewington, Director of Audit Services  
**Subject:** Transmittal of Development Review Process  
Performance Audit (September 2015)

### **Executive Summary**

The Department of Audit Services completed the report on the Development Review Process Performance Audit dated September 2015. The purpose of the audit was to determine the operating efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat Approval Process in place at the City-County Planning Department.

### **Background**

The Development Review Process in the City of Durham is a complex multi-step process which frequently requires several months from project inception to construction release. The process includes review and coordination by many different functions within the City, as well as outside agencies.

The City-County Planning Department is the primary agent in the Site Plan/Preliminary Plat/Final Plat/Exempt Plat Approval Process and assists in coordinating the review by other agencies. Site Plans are grouped in the following categories by the City-County Planning Department:

Site Plans Approved Administratively: Level 1 Site Plans; Level 2 Site Plans; Level 3 Site Plans; and Level 4 Site Plans. The Department also coordinates and reviews Major Site Plans, which are approved by the governing body.

### **Results in Brief**

Adequate controls existed over the fee collection process. While controls are adequate over cash collections, overall, opportunity exists to improve the operating efficiency of the Site Plan, Exempt Plat, and Final Plat review process in the following areas:

- Timely review of Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat applications is vital to the development review process overall. Application processing by other City and County departments and outside agencies involved in the review process has not been timely. Even though the Planning Department is responsible for the approval process, they do not have authority to hold other City departments or outside agencies accountable for meeting timeliness standards;
- Exploring the possibility of using an Electronic Plan Submission system could allow for a quicker turnaround time in reviewing applications;
- Enhancing the information presented on the City of Durham's website pertaining to the Site Plan, Exempt Plat and Final Plat Approval Process;
- Enhancing the performance measures pertaining to this Process; and
- Strengthening the quality review process.

**Issues and Analysis**

The attached report details the objectives, observations, and results of the Development Review Process Performance Audit dated September 2015.

**Recommendation**

The Department of Audit Services recommends the City Council receive and accept the Development Review Process Performance Audit dated September 2015 as presented and approved at the September 28, 2015 Audit Services Oversight Committee meeting.

Attachment